

Remarks

This reply is responsive to the Office communication mailed March 8, 2005, in which the Examiner has reopened prosecution following applicants' appeal. By this reply, applicants are exercising their option to file a reply under 37 CFR 1.111.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite the step of specifying a logical condition relating to the object for transfer of the object to an archive database. Claim 1 has been further amended to recite that the object is transferred to the archive database if the logical condition evaluates as being true. The logical condition recited in claim 1 may be a time-dependent condition relating to the object (e.g., that the object has not been used for a predetermined period) or some other condition relating to the object such as a property value (e.g., that a process instance was started before a certain date or that a loan amount exceeds a certain value).

Various other claims have been amended to conform to the changes made in claim 1. Thus, claim 2 has been amended to recite that the logical condition comprises an occurrence of a predetermined event, while claim 3 has been amended to recite that the logical condition comprises nonuse of the object by the WFMS for a predetermined period.

Claim 5 has been amended to recite that the process instance is selected among instances of the process model depending on the value "of one or more properties of the process instance". This change makes it clear that as few as one property can be involved and that it is the one or more properties of the particular process instance that control the selection (page 10, lines 4-5).

Finally, two new claims have been added. Claim 14, dependent on claim 1, recites that the logical condition comprises a Boolean expression (page 9, lines 13-14; page 10, line 18). Claim 15, dependent on claim 14, recites further that the Boolean expression uses an operator ("Operator") to relate an object parameter ("Property") to a value ("Value") (page 10, line 18).

As amended, claim 1 and the claims dependent thereon are believed to distinguish patentably over the art cited by the Examiner. In particular, these claims are believed to distinguish over the

references applied by the Examiner in his most recent office action: U.S. Patent 6,073,109 to Flores et al. ("Flores"), U.S. Patent 5,771,384 to Remington et al. ("Remington"), and U.S. Patent to 6,067,548 to Cheng ("Cheng").

Flores discloses a computerized system for managing business processes using linked workflows. The specification documents a number of program calls, including one named AWSArchiveBP (cols. 101 and 108), which archives a business process or all completed business processes on specified media. The invoker of the AWSArchiveBP call can specify the business process being archived, the media to which the business process is to be archived, and the date and time at which archiving is done. The invoker cannot, however, specify a logical condition relating to an object for transfer of the object to an archive database as claimed by applicants. Rather, such invoker can only specify the date and time for such transfer, which are not logical conditions "relating to an object" since they are independent of any particular object.

Remington discloses a method and system for replacement and extension of container interfaces. Among the properties specified for a container interface is the Archive property, a Boolean variable indicating whether an item "has been modified since the item was last archived" (col. 8, lines 36-39). By using the value of this variable, "an archiving utility can to determine whether to archive the item" (col. 7, lines 40-42).

While Remington uses the term "archive", "backup" would appear to be an even better term, since the archived item continues to be modified even after it has been archived. In any event, since the archived item must have remained available in the active database to have been modified, Remington is obviously not "transferring" (i.e., moving) an object to an archive database as claimed by applicant. Indeed, if one were seeking direction for transferring objects, Remington would lead the art in exactly the wrong direction, since his decision to archive is based on recent activity (modification of an item since it was last archived), rather than recent inactivity as is generally the case when transferring an object to an archive database.

Additionally, Remington only allows one to specify absolutely (by setting the Archive property to true), that a particular item is to be archived. Thus, a user cannot specify a logical condition

(which may or may not be true) for transfer of an object to an archive database as claimed by applicants.

Finally, Cheng¹ describes a “dynamic organizational database” that is said to be an improvement over workflow management systems and other business process management (BPM) systems of the prior art. Cheng speaks of a “forgotten state” in which information relating to a “member object” (Fig. 5) is archived or deleted (Fig. 6: 128; col. 5, lines 15-16; col. 8, lines 31-50). However, the one example of a member object that is given is that of an employee who has left the enterprise (col. 8, lines 38-41). Cheng thus fails to teach archiving process models or instances as distinguished from the data managed by such objects. Certainly, Cheng does not teach transferring a process instance or process model of a WFMS database as claimed by applicants.

For the foregoing reasons, claim 1 and the claims dependent thereon are believed to distinguish patentably over the art cited by the Examiner.

Claim 3 is further believed to distinguish patentably over the art cited by virtue of its recitation that the logical condition comprises nonuse of the object for a predetermined period. While Flores speaks of archiving “completed business processes” (col. 108 lines 45-47), this requires some mechanism for determining when a business is “complete”. Applicants’ claimed invention, on the other hand, in effect determines that a process model or instance is “completed” if it has not been used for a predetermined period, relieving the user of the necessity of making a decision and transferring objects that would otherwise lie around unused.

Claims 14-15 are likewise believed to distinguish patentably over the art cited by virtue of the recitation in claim 14 that the logical condition is specified using a Boolean expression. Finally, claim 15 is believed to distinguish patentably over the art cited by virtue of its recitation that the Boolean expression uses an operator to relate an object parameter to a value.

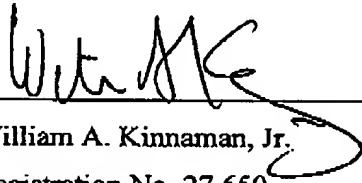
¹ The Examiner asserts that claims 7-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Flores in view of Cheng (page 5). Presumably, the Examiner means claims 7 and 9-10, since claim 8 was already rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(c) as being anticipated by Flores (page 3). Also, only claims 7 and 9-10 recite the feature Cheng was supposedly cited for—namely, restoring an archived object back to an active database.

Conclusion

Entry of this response and reconsideration of the application in the light of the above remarks is respectfully requested. It is hoped that upon such consideration the Examiner will hold all claims allowable and pass the case to issue at an early date. Such action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
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